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# Glastonbury

from its first settlement  
by the Wethersfield colonists  
in 1635 and its separation and  
incorporation as a town in 1693

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*Published in connection with the  
Celebration of the 300th  
Anniversary of the founding  
of CONNECTICUT*

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1635



1935

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*Glastonbury*

1935

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# I

## Early Glastonbury



LET us try to picture to ourselves what manner of country our ancestors found in this Connecticut valley, three hundred years ago. A wilderness of woods and swamps and tangled shrubbery. Instead of broad and fruitful farms, here and there a little clearing, where the patient squaws dug the earth with their hoes of shell and raised scanty crops of corn, beans, and pumpkins.

Instead of busy cities and villages, here and there a cluster of wigwams in the edge of the forest. Instead of broad, smooth streets, a few narrow and winding trails trodden by the Indians' moccasined feet.

No craft upon the river, save now and then a log canoe, with a solitary fisher.

No vehicles of any kind, no beasts of burden, no bridges, no busy mills, no waving orchards, and no homes. Such was the land.

But what shall we say of the men and women who faced this lonely wilderness and out of it carved homes for themselves, and laid the foundations of a strong, free State?

We marvel at their courage, their steadfastness, their almost incredible labors. We feel ourselves timid and weak when we think of the iron resolution which their time demanded.

They were not all saints, but they had the love of liberty that held them firm through hunger, and cold, and untold dangers.

They had their faults, they made their mistakes, but they won through.

In the town which we now call Wethersfield there was, three hundred years ago, a little settlement where a half-dozen families had spent the previous winter, shivering in their hastily built log huts.

These first settlers were the Adventurers, who had arrived the year before from Watertown, Massachusetts, where they were crowded for room,—or thought they were.

Determined not to be crowded again, they held a meeting and voted, on motion of Sam'l Wakeman and Ancient Stoughton, that the bounds of their settlement, which they then called Watertown, be extended on the east side of the Great River, six miles from north to south, and three miles east into the wilderness.

Apparently these enterprising people had no doubt that their Indian friends who had invited them into the valley, and had a continent to give away, would be pleased to bestow upon them a few more square miles of wilderness in return for some yards of good cloth and a few iron kettles.

Without doubt the Indians, when making this absurd bargain, expected to live as friendly neighbors with these charming white people,—to set up their lodge-poles in close proximity to the white man's roof-tree. Not so with the English settlers. With them "cleanliness was next to godliness," or a little ahead, and having secured the land, the less they saw of its former owners, the better they were pleased. So poor, disappointed Sequin Sowheag took his wounded dignity away to Mattabasset.

Later on, Sowheag being dead, these ignorant children of the forest set their marks to a deed for the entire tract on both sides of the River. The names of the signers were Turramuggus, Spuno, and four other heirs of Sowheag.

Thus Glastonbury began in Wethersfield and remained a part of that town for fifty-eight years.

In 1639 the Wethersfield men took steps to have their land, on the east side of the river, surveyed and laid out into farms of varying width, but all extending east three miles into the wilderness.

These long strips were allotted to the residents of Wethersfield, probably according to the amounts each had contributed to the original purchase.

The narrowest was of seven rods, and went to John Thompson. A strip twenty-two rods wide was allotted to John Robbins and later fell to his son-in-law, Eleazer Kimberly. After three generations of Kimberlys, it was sold to Jonathan Brace, then to Zephaniah Hollister Smith, who left it to his five famous daughters.



This is perhaps the most famous farm in town, being the only one that was never divided until the present owner, Mrs. Lambert, sold the part east of Main Street to her son.

The widest strip of 200 rods, and containing twelve hundred acres, was granted to Clement Chaplin, "the wealthy and factious ruling elder." This tract extended from near Chestnut Hill road about one half mile north.

(It is now thought that Richard Treat's farm in Nayaug was even larger than Chaplin's, but it is not clear.)

The next widest, 150 rods, containing nine hundred acres, went to Matthew Mitchel and lay next south of the Chaplin lot.

Neither of these two prominent men even became residents of Glastonbury. Chaplin left Wethersfield for Massachusetts, and later his land was sold to Rev. Timothy Stevens and Samuel Hale. Mitchel's land was divided into four sections and sold,—one section being now the Charles Tryon farm. Mitchel himself went to Stamford.

One good feature of the long and narrow farms was that each contained some meadow, which had probably been kept partly cleared by the Indians, some arable upland, and some rough hill land. On the west end they had fishing rights, and on the east an abundance of timber and stone. The disadvantages, as to fencing, can be easily imagined.

It appears that few, if any, of the original settlers of Wethersfield ever became residents of Glastonbury. Probably they fenced and improved some portions of their land, possibly built small houses, but eventually gave these farms to their sons or sold them to other settlers. It was certainly so with the Welles, Treat, and Hollister families.

In 1671 the Wethersfield settlers made a second purchase from the Indians of a large tract extending five *large* miles east of the first purchase. The first mile of this purchase was set apart as a Common, but the difficulty in keeping settlers and squatters from encroaching on this common land was so great that in 1757 the town voted that it be divided among the residents.

As time went on the population of Wethersfield increased and in 1685 Governor Robert Treat gave the inhabitants a patent to all the land claimed by them on both sides of the river. The names of the patentees were Captain Samuel Wolcott, Captain John Chester, Lieutenant James Treat, Mr. Sam'l Wolcott, Mr. John Deming, Sr., Mr. Robert Welles, Mr. John Robbins, Mr. John Hollister, Richard Smith, and the rest of the proprietors—names not mentioned.



In 1653 the men of the east side of the river obtained, from the General Court, exemption from training with those on the west side and permission to hold their military drills on the east side of the river. This important change was duly celebrated in 1853.

The population on the east side had not increased very rapidly, owing perhaps to Indian wars in other parts of New England, but in 1690 there were about forty householders here. In that year a petition was presented to the General Court asking for incorporation of the east side as a separate town. Wethersfield had already agreed to a separation. This petition was granted on condition that they build a meeting-house and have a good, orthodox minister settled among them.

These conditions were fulfilled and in October 1693 the east side became a separate town under the name of Glastenbury. The first minister was Rev. Timothy Stevens who remained with the church thirty-three years, or until his death in 1726. It is interesting to note that his salary was at first £60, or about \$300.00.

The house built for him is now standing and is the property of Mrs. A. E. Moseley. His descendants, under other names, are quite numerous in town.

The second minister, Rev. Ashbel Woodbridge, remained with the church thirty years. His sons and grandsons became influential citizens, but the name is now extinct in this town.

The first church, built on the Green, was burned in 1634. Its successor was built in 1637 about one-half mile farther south as a concession to the Nayaug farmers, who still had to travel three miles each Sabbath. This church stood one hundred years; but meanwhile a second small church had been built in the eastern part of the town.

The parish was divided—all east of the Common going to the second church which was built in the woods at the center of the new parish, which now received the name of Eastbury, having previously been known as East Farms.

About 1806 an Episcopal parish was formed, and a little later a church built near the present Legion Hall. This point was the dividing line between Naubuc Farms and Nayaug Farms, the church being meant to minister to both sections.

A Methodist church was built in Wassuc in 1810, and another in South Glastonbury in 1828. The latter building is now a library.

The first Catholic church, St. Augustine's, was built in South Glastonbury in 1878. There are now ten churches in Glastonbury.

Among the founders of the town were some educated men. Their learning and culture were, in some degree, passed on to their children, but the hard conditions of pioneer life, the stern struggle for the bare necessities, must have tended to make the next generation hardy and resourceful rather than scholars and gentlemen. That they did not sink into barbarism was due largely to the church.

Very wisely they clung to that one redeeming feature of their pioneer life. No town could be incorporated without a church. Minister's rates were compulsory, and church attendance also, with some exceptions. Their meeting-houses were not only for worship, but social centers also—the only places where families from remote farms could meet and mingle with their neighbors. The ministers who had come with them from England were educated men and by the time they laid down their burdens, Harvard was sending out graduates to take their places. The first minister, Rev. Timothy Stevens, was a Harvard graduate, but the second, Rev. Ashbel Woodbridge, was from Yale.

From the beginning Glastonbury has had two centers—Naubuc Farms and Nayaug Farms—connected first by an Indian trail which later became the "Country road" which was dotted by occasional farmhouses, like beads on a string. Which of the two centers was first started can not be determined. It is known that the first two houses at the Nayaug Farms were the Hollister and the Treat houses, not now standing, though their immediate successors are well known.

Whether the first houses were of logs is another matter in doubt. It is probable that the few built before the first saw mill was established, about 1657, were of logs. It is probable too that some single men lived for a time in cave cellars or dug-outs.

It is well known that the first church in Wethersfield was built of logs, "underdaubed with clay." A son of the first minister wrote of it,—“Ye first meeting-house was solid,—made to withstand ye wicked onslaughts of ye Red Skins. Its foundations were layed in ye feare of ye Lord, but ye walls were truly layed in ye fear of ye Indians.”

After the church, or even before, came the school. In the very early days doubtless each mother taught her children around the open fire in the long winter evenings. Then a few neighbors joined and supported a neighborhood school in the house of one who had a spare room. A public school was opened in the north part of the town as



early as 1701, a little later in the south part, and soon after at East Farms.

As to the early industries, a volume might be written. Each man had a farm, even the ministers, and cultivated it. Also each man must have a trade at which he could work winters. A farmer must also be a carpenter, a cooper, a tanner, a shoemaker, a blacksmith, or a weaver,—for everything must be made at home or in the neighborhood, and each stream had its small mill or shop.

Very early Glastonbury men began to build boats and soon progressed to small ships. For many years ship-building was carried on at Naubuc, but more extensively at Nayaug. With these ships they made voyages to the Carolinas and the West Indies. They carried out lumber, horses, salt fish, and farm products which they exchanged for sugar, molasses, ginger, mahogany and other tropical products.

These voyages were profitable but hazardous,—so much so that at one time it was said that there was scarcely a family on either side of the river that had not lost at least one of its number in this trade. It is not thought that ships built in Glastonbury were large enough to make the “triangular voyage” from New England to Africa with rum, thence to the West Indies with slaves, and thence home with molasses to make more rum.

If Glastonbury or Wethersfield sea captains made the “triangular voyage,” or were in any way engaged in the slave trade, they were chary about leaving records.

Sometimes the ship itself was sold and Mexican silver received in pay. The writer remembers hearing an old resident say that he had seen a pile of ten thousand Mexican dollars on the floor of the “strong room” in the home of Captain Roswell Hollister,—“all that Black Ross could wheel up from ‘Log Landing’ ” after the sale of a ship in a southern port.

This Captain Roswell was one of the larger shipbuilders, and is said to have built a “hundred sail” of vessels—sloops, brigs, and schooners. The Welleses, Sellews, Hales, and Gaineses were also engaged in ship building.

It might almost be said that fighting England’s wars was an early industry. Eight men from this town lost their lives in the expedition to Havana in 1762. Of the thousand men which Connecticut furnished for the Havana expedition, only about one hundred returned. We may think we have our troubles but in those “good old days” our forbears also had theirs, which were quite as serious.



## II

### Noted People

**I**N the early history of the town two men were prominent: Eleazer Kimberly, who was Town Clerk for many years as well as Secretary of the Colony; and Gershom Buckley, a physician and lawyer of such ability as "to make the worse appear the better reason." Later on Hon. Thomas Welles, Colonel of Militia and Governor's Assistant, was a leading man in the town and the colony.

Gideon Welles was a native of the town, but removed to Hartford where he was Postmaster and publisher of the Hartford Times. President Lincoln made him Secretary of the Navy, which office he held through two administrations.

Two men of the town have represented the state in Congress: Hon. Sidney Dean who was elected in the third district in 1855 and 1857; and Hon. John R. Buck who represented the 1st district in 1881 and 1885.

James Baker Williams established the internationally known company which bears his name for the manufacture of shaving soap.

John Howard Hale was a popular speaker on horticultural subjects, a promoter of fruit culture, and for some years Master of the State Grange.

But perhaps the Smith sisters did more to put Glastonbury on the map than any one of these men. Nearly a century ago Mrs. Hannah Smith and her five daughters were earnest advocates of the emancipation of the slaves. The first anti-slavery petition ever presented to Congress was drawn up by them, signed by about forty Glastonbury women, and put before Congress by Ex-President John Quincy Adams.

After the freeing of the slaves, the sisters became interested in the Woman Suffrage movement. The story is too long to be told here but Miss Abby, standing in a wagon at the polling place and calling on the assembled voters to be just, and to give women tax-payers the right to vote, might well be the subject of an historical painting.

They suffered ridicule and abuse, but they gave a mighty push to the cause when they allowed their cows to be seized and sold at the public sign-post, rather than pay an unjust tax. The news was flashed all over the country and from that time on the cause was no longer a hopeless one.

Besides being a reformer, Julia Smith was a remarkable linguist. She taught herself Greek and Hebrew, and translated the entire Bible into modern English—a stupendous task for any one to perform alone.

FLORENCE HOLLISTER CURTISS



### III

## Tour of Houses Built Before 1800

**G**LASTONBURY is dotted with ancient houses, beautiful in themselves, and interesting in their history. Those mentioned below will be open for visitors on October 1, 3 and 5 from 2 to 5 P. M.

*1* • The fine old house at the corner of Hebron Avenue and Main Street, built in 1783 by Samuel Welles, was the birthplace of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln, and of his brother Thadeus, for many years a leading citizen of this town. The estate has been in the Welles family since the first settlement.

*2* • The house next north of the Congregational Church known as the Benton House and now owned by Dennis M. Sullivan is the rare three story gambrel-roof type, built in 1740.

*3* • The quaint and odd-shaped house known as the Wickham house, now owned by R. H. Kellogg, Sr., built in 1735.

*4* • One half mile farther south stands the large colonial house built in 1712 by Joseph Moseley, now owned by W. H. Carrier. Built for a tavern, it has a hinged partition which, when raised, made room for dancing; a smoke-oven in chimney on second floor; a weave-room in an out-building—and other antique features.

In August 1787 a terrible hurricane destroyed the home of Mrs. Robbins, of Rocky Hill, a sister of Mrs. Moseley, killing her and two of her children. Her wedding dress was blown three miles across the river and dropped on the roof of the barn of her sister's home.

5. Nearly opposite the Moseley house is the small house built for the first minister. It is interesting, not only as an example of early architecture but also for its association with the first two ministers—Stevens and Woodbridge. Built 1693.

6. About an eighth of a mile farther north on rising ground on the west side of the street is the beautiful and artistic home of Mr. and Mrs. L. R. Fauntleroy, built by William Miller in 1693. The lines, proportions, and setting of this house may be called perfect.

7. The Kimberly house, built by Eleazur, or his son Thomas, about 1730 is attractive in itself and for its association with the Smith sisters whose home it was for the greater part of the 19th century. It is now owned by Mrs. John Lambert.

8. Another house that should not be missed is the Welles-Shipman house in South Glastonbury, built by Hon. Thomas Welles about 1743 and sold to Captain Stephen Shipman in 1785. It is now owned by Dr. and Mrs. James Ward, who appreciate its charm, and add to it by their cordial welcome.

CLOSED 9. At the corner of Main and Highland streets is an interesting house built by Jehiel Goodrich in 1720 and owned now by Earl Hodge. The view of the valley from this spot to the north and west is inspiring.

I O. In Nayaug, on the banks of Roaring Brook, is the famous old house believed to have been built by John Hollister in 1675. It is now owned and carefully preserved by Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Killam.

CLOSED I I. A quarter-mile beyond this spot we find ourselves in what was once Treat territory and may visit a house built by John Caswell in 1760, and now owned by P. W. Miller.

I 2. The Thomas Treat house, 1700, now owned by Mrs. William Connell, an early example of the gambrel-roof type is interesting as the place where Gershon Buckley spent his last days in the home of his daughter, Dorothy Treat.

CLOSED I 3. Taking a long jump from Nayaug to the hills of Wassuc, we come to the former home of John R. Buck, M.C., now occupied by his grandson, Richard Buck. Near by is the famous old Asbury Oak.

I 4. On the Manchester road in Wassuc is the authentic Salt-Box house built in 1756 by Samuel Talcott for his son, Samuel, Jr. Mary Talcott who became the grandmother of Admiral Dewey was



born in this house, which later became the home of James McLean, the Revolutionary patriot. Now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Thompson.

*I 5.* The house on Hebron Avenue, known as the home of the late E. B. Treat, is now occupied by Vincent Brennan, of the Brookside Manufacturing Company. This house was built by James Wright in 1761.

*I 6.* In the extreme eastern part of the town on Hebron Avenue is a large house said to have been built by Elizur Hale, Jr., in 1774, now occupied by Natalie Porzio.



## IV

### Other Old Houses

**B**ETWEEN stations 35 and 41 there are perhaps a dozen fine old houses which will be identified by markers—among them, the home of W. E. Gates, built by Timothy Hale in 1750, Mrs. Milton Tracy, built by Andrew Hale in 1780, O. R. Morgan, built by ——— Plummer in 1750, C. Douglas, built by Ebenezer Plummer in 1760. Farther south is the Wm. Welles house, 1750, now owned by Timothy Dickinson. In this house two classes from Yale College had their headquarters during the troublous Revolutionary times.

Near Legion Hall is the beautifully situated David Hale house, 1760, now owned by Mrs. William Brainard.

On High Street is the house long known as the Bates House, 1748, owned by Mrs. H. L. Thompson.

On Still Hill the charming gambrel-roofed cottage, built by Peter Goodrich, 1700, is now owned by Miss Helen Taylor.

In Nayaug stands the Amos Hollister house of salt-box architecture 1695, now owned by A. W. Kinne.

The Joseph Welles Tavern, 1776, stands next south of the Glastonbury Bank, and is now owned by Lena and Robert Chapman.

Space forbids the mention of more.



## V

# Types of Ancient Houses

THE ancient houses now left can be grouped into five classes. The earliest are the leanto or salt-box house, and the small one-story cottage, now called the Cape Cod house. A good example of the first is the Dayton house, 1760, now owned by John Hurst; and of the second the Dabiski house, 1750, now owned by David Taylor, near Taylortown school house.

The salt-box houses were large and probably built by the well-to-do, and the little cottages answered for the humbler folk.

The gambrel-roof house has prevailed through all periods, with variations. A fine example is on Still Hill and owned by Miss Helen Taylor, 1700.

The central chimney houses are well known. All have in front a door and nine windows, and in the rear a low leanto, which joins the main wall just below the second story windows, thus giving better light and more head-room on the second floor than could be had in the Leanto type.

The last type, that of three stories, a gambrel-roof, chimneys at each end, and a central hall, is not common in this town. The John-athan Hale house owned by Ralston Sherman, is a good example. This house has an aristocratic, high-bred air that is quite imposing.

Of course these types overlap and intermingle, and no hard and fast line can be drawn between the periods of construction.

FLORENCE HOLLISTER CURTIS  
HERBERT T. CLARK

# TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION

*September 30th—October 6th*

EXHIBITS OPEN DAILY—*Sept. 30—Oct. 4—2 to 10 P. M.*  
*Oct. 5—10 A. M. to 10 P. M.*

*Ticket admitting to all 25¢*

ANTIQUES—*Williams Memorial*  
OLD DOCUMENTS—*Town Office Building*  
INDIAN LORE—*Town Office Building*  
HOBBIES—*Grange Hall*  
MANUFACTURERS—*Grange Hall*  
AGRICULTURE—*Public Library Building*

## FREE EXHIBITS

INDIAN LONG HOUSE—*South Glastonbury*  
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES—*High School*



TOUR OF HOUSES BUILT BEFORE 1800 *Ticket \$1.00*  
*2-5 P. M. Oct. 1, 3 and 5*

COLONIAL TEAS—*Williams Memorial—3-5 P. M. October 1, 2, 3, 4*



SATURDAY, OCT. 5TH—*Historic Parade, 2 P. M.*

~~CANCELLED~~ *Pageant—"Parade of the Nations"—High School Grounds—4 P. M.*

SUNDAY, OCT. 6TH—*Dedication of Tablet at Town Hall near site of First Meeting House—2:30 P. M.*

*Address, Frank C. Tindale and Choral Singing on the Green—3 P. M.*

*(If it should rain on Sunday the gathering will be in the High School Auditorium.)*

*Information and Headquarters at the office of*

*LAURA HALE GORTON, STATION 35.*

*Salt Box Information House. Station 33—10 A. M. to 10 P. M.*







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